

Recent developments in the Greek Statistical System

The European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) welcomes the fourth report of the Greek Good Practice Advisory Committee (GPAC)¹ published in December 2017. The report states that the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) continues to function in full conformity with the principle of Professional Independence, by producing high quality statistics in an objective manner and free from external influence. The report also states that public trust in ELSTAT "would appear to be relatively high".

While much has been achieved in ELSTAT in recent years, the Board takes note that further improvement is needed with regard to the adequacy of resources. In particular, the GPAC report recommends the strengthening of internal corporate management structures, the adoption of more appropriate procedures for filling senior positions in ELSTAT, and the introduction of flexible deployment strategies to ensure highly-qualified staff can be retained under the planned new organisational structure.

The Board asks ELSTAT to continue to address the weaknesses identified by the GPAC report, with the support of Eurostat and of the other members of the European Statistical System, in order to improve the Greek Statistical System. Moreover, the Board urges the Greek political authorities to strengthen ELSTAT in terms of human and financial resources, and to facilitate granting ELSTAT access to administrative data on physical persons to further improve statistics in relation to social issues.

The GPAC report also refers to the continuing court proceedings against the former President of ELSTAT, Mr Andreas Georgiou, and the potential damage these cases may have on the public perception of the credibility of Greek official statistics. The Board only recently received the translation of the court decision taken on 1 August 2017, in which Mr. Georgiou was declared innocent of two of the three allegations. He was found guilty of communicating to Eurostat a national report of government figures, including the government deficit for 2009, without bringing those figures to the attention of the ELSTAT Board as a collective body, and without the latter agreeing to communicate them.

There have been some discussions recently regarding the indemnification of the President of ELSTAT (and senior officials acting on his/her authority) against any legal costs arising from challenges to professional decisions taken in the course of their duties. The Board notes that a procedure for applying for indemnification is now in place.

The Board reiterates its concerns, made in its Opinion in May 2017², about the ability of the Heads of the national statistical institutes to act independently from external political influences. The Board sees this independence as not only a requirement under EU law³, but also as being essential for the credibility of official statistics and a key principle of the European Statistics Code of Practice⁴.

Finally, the Board is pleased that Mr Gerry O'Hanlon, the former Director-General of the Irish Central Statistical Office, has recently been appointed as the ESGAB representative in GPAC for a further two-year term, starting on 30 March 2018.

¹ Fourth GPAC Report (accessed 19 March 2018); available from: <http://www.statistics.gr/en/good-practice-committee>.

² ESGAB Opinions (accessed 19 March 2018); available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/esgab/opinions>.

³ Amended Regulation (EC) 223/2009, Article 5a(2) (accessed 19 March 2018); available from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32009R0223>.

⁴ European Statistics Code of Practice (Accessed 19 March 2018); available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/european-statistics-code-of-practice>.

Further information

ESGAB Opinions, Press Releases and Annual Reports are available on ESGAB's homepage (<http://ec.europa.eu/esgab/>).

Contact for media assistance

To arrange an interview with the ESGAB Chair, Mr Enrico Giovannini, please contact the ESGAB Secretariat: Steve Clarke (estat-esgab@ec.europa.eu), tel. +352 4301-32527.

About ESGAB

ESGAB provides an independent overview of the implementation of the Code of Practice. It seeks to enhance the professional independence, integrity and accountability of the European Statistical System, key elements of the Code, and the quality of European statistics. Its tasks include the preparation of an annual report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Code by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole. ESGAB also advises the Commission (Eurostat) on appropriate measures to facilitate implementation.

European Statistics Code of Practice (the Code)

The European Statistics Code of Practice sets the standards for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. It builds on a common definition of quality in statistics used in the European Statistical System. The Code is a self-regulatory instrument containing 15 principles which address the institutional environment in which national and EU statistical authorities operate, and the production and dissemination of European statistics. Its implementation is supported by a set of indicators of good practice for each principle.

The **European Statistical System**⁵ (ESS) is a partnership between the European Union's statistical authority, i.e. the Commission (Eurostat), the national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities (ONAs) responsible in each Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.

⁵ European Statistical System (accessed 19 March 2018); available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-system/overview>.